

Collective city-making in Brussels

'to think as doing'

This paper is the result of a joint study emerging from a practice-based PhD and the Brussels Selfcityproject. Through the PhD an urban practice is developing – action-research – that aims at gaining a better understanding of collective tactical and grassroots city-making processes. For this, a constructive research collaboration with Piet Van Meerbeek and his Selfcityproject has been set up. Together we aimed to unravel, develop and empower collective city-making initiatives in the Brussels context. A case study has been made of five carefully selected projects – amongst which the action-case of the PhD. This has been done through a framework for 'features of civic making' which focuses on the critical aspects of the role and position of the actors, activism, ad hoc/organisation, openness and commoning. In this paper, followed by a brief review of the growing movement of citizen initiatives, we will describe the outlined framework and give an overview of the studied cases using this structure. In the final chapter we will present our conclusions and speculate on how these findings can inspire the making and advancement of the own practice and similar future initiatives.

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Since the economic crisis in 2008/9, processes of tactical and grassroots city-making are becoming more apparent in several cities around the globe like Berlin (Oswalt, Overmeyer, & Misselwitz, 2013), Bogota (Ortega Hermida, 2014), Istanbul (Tan, 2013) and San Francisco (Rebar, 2014). Citizens self-organise to generate creative processes that provide an alternative for the neoliberal systems, which bring the value of money over the economic and the social (Commons Josaphat, 2015). In cities like Madrid and Berlin plenty of civic projects – after the participatory movement of the 70/80's – rethink their own urban environment. However, it is uncertain if this multitude of very local interventions can have a major impact on the scale of our cities and their societies. It is in this context we will focus on the preliminary results of a selection of initiatives that – like the own practice case of the PhD – aim to provide an alternative to these criticised system in Brussels. For this it is desired to gain a better understanding of their ways of making that situate themselves in the margins of our urban environment.

In the particular, superdiverse and strongly polarised context of Brussels, the practice-based PhD research (Van Reusel, 2015) aims to gain a better understanding of these collective tactical and grassroots city-making processes. By actively participating in one of these collectives, the architect-researcher aims to gain more insight in these practices that manage to provide an alternative for the dominant and conventional urbanism systems. The combination of personal experience and research aims to bring a valuable contribution to the recognition, development and multiplication of these practices. A similar concern is addressed through the Selfcity project that is set up by BRAL vzw, an established NGO that supports residents of Brussels in their struggle for a more liveable city. This paper is the result of a joint study in which a share of these emerging city-making processes are identified and explored in a relational dialogue with the involved actors. One of the five selected cases is Commons

Josaphat, wherein the architect-researcher is one of the drivers. Following questions are addressed in this paper:

- What are the key features that contribute to collective city-making processes in Brussels?
- What can we learn when we look at the own practice in relation to a selection of cases, through this framework of 'features of civic making'?

After this brief introduction a more elaborated chapter on the context will follow. This part will outline the particularity of the Brussels cases and describe the involved PhD research and the Selfcity project more in detail. Subsequently this paper will make a case study of five initiatives, among which Commons Josaphat which is the focus of the first author's PhD. Informed by local practices and interviews we will construct a framework for 'features of civic making' to then discuss the selected cases. We will conclude with a brief reflection on how this study can support the architect-researcher in her own practice as well as how it can enable the making of future initiatives and their empowerment.

1. A Background on Civic-making Practices and the Local Context

The link between the above described growing movement of citizen groups that take up initiative and the global crisis is addressed by the international 'We-Traders' exhibition (Fitz & Eppele, 2015). This travelling exposition widens the notion of urbanism by highlighting a broad range of citizen initiatives as a reaction to a both economic and social crisis that touches upon several aspects of the urban life. These processes of civic making rethink the city on a social, economic and ecological level (Duero, 2014).

In 'Make_Shift City: the Renegotiation of the urban commons', Francesca Ferguson (2014) addresses these civic platforms as a meaningful alternative for the conventional urban planning practices. This very hand-on way of 'making' works on a concrete (spatial) utopia and experiments creative and novel practices by intervening besides the established codes and regulations. These 'ground up' civic activities generate a process of self-governance in the local commons (Petrescu & Petcou, 2014). By working in the gaps of the dominant systems these 'margin' practices want to superimpose social relationships and common sense over ownership and individuality.

A significant movement of citizen initiatives is also at work in the Brussels context. This super-diverse city has a reputable history of strong citizen resistance to bigger infrastructural (re) development plans. From the late 70's, these 'luttes urbaines' (urban struggles) led to a relatively open consultancy mechanisms for urban planning (Doucet, 2010). Together with the rise of NGO's like BRAL a strong foothold was created for citizens to block or delay contested building projects. However, this did not stop a growing sense of disagreement with how the city is governed. Whereas in the past citizens gathered and got on the street to protest against a concrete threat, citizens now take on a positive approach of 'can do'. A wide network of collectives is aiming to make the Brussels city themselves, each within their own theme of concern. The recently organised series of 'Ateliers Selfcity' (Brussels Academy; Crosstalks; BRAL, 2015) brought several of these Brussels initiatives in the spotlight. It is in this context both the PhD research and the Selfcity project found a fertile ground for a collaborative study that researches these forms of civic making. The PhD conducts an action-research to explore alternative and creative practices that empower communities to imagine, explore and construct more liveable cities from an architectural perspective. This liveability is based on the production of relational goods like trust, solidarity, care, collaboration, safety, ... etc. over the design of finished and material products (Manzini, 2015). The architect-researcher joined the Commons Josaphat collective and recently co-created the setup of temporary use (Kohoutek & Kamleithner, 2013). The existing citizen collective

is active since more or less two years and is working in a collaborative manner debating and envisioning an alternative for the way the Brussels Josaphat Ancienne Gare site will be developed. They are about to finalise a collectively written charter and recently initiated temporary use in this urban fringe land. It is this practice of tactical urbanism (Baraona & Gonzalez, 2011) (De Smet, 2014) that is the base for the understanding, development and enforcing of these collective processes of city-making. The action-research methodology aims to make the study itself more accessible and includes involved actors as full participants.

In parallel to this PhD research, BRAL vzw initiated the Selfcity project with the goal to further unravel and support alternative practices of making city that emerge from the bottom-up. As a strongly embedded Brussels NGO, BRAL supports residents in their struggles to improve the liveability of their city for 40 years. After investing a lot in the setting of examples for participatory processes, their focus is now directed to support citizens that get self-organised and act instead of waiting for actions to be taken by the authorities, private companies or established NGO's. More concrete, the Selfcity project offers a digital platform to provide an overview and analysis of bottom-up initiatives and experiences of 'commons' in and around Brussels. Simultaneously it functions as a meeting place to collect and share insights and experiences about these initiatives in an open and accessible manner. The final part is the conception of a more solid network and narrative through a dialogue with involved actors.

The Selfcity project methodology is developed by Piet Van Meerbeek, executive member of BRAL vzw. It targets a cooperation with the studied collectives that goes beyond the simple observation of and reflection on their actions. As a first phase, interviews took place with 10 selected collectives, chosen for their engagement in positive action, their willingness to collaborate with other groups and the variety of cases they represent all together. The methodology of the interviews varies according to the characteristics of the collective (number of persons involved, thematic focus, etc.). The second phase consists of a collective meeting, exchange and reflection

moment with these 10 collectives. The different projects are presented by their own initiators after which an open discussion follows. As a third and final phase, a collective exhibition is built together. For this paper the Make Your Own City research and the Selfcity project made a selection of the citizen collectives they study, amongst which the action-research case of the PhD is represented. All studied cases are situated in the Brussels context and have been selected on basis of the researchers' experience and interpretation of them. The five chosen projects enhance a variety in addressed public, background of drivers, goals, themes and ways of organising and working as basis for the comparative study. It is the goal to provide a diverse selection of the Brussels initiatives.

2. Practicing the Commons: a Case Study

Within this research a framework for 'features of civic making' is built. This frame is developed in collaboration by both researchers and brings together key issues that are being explored in the own practice with features that are in the interest of the Selfcity project. In this way the own Commons Josaphat case can be positioned within the wider context of other Brussels collective city-making initiatives. The Selfcity project initiator gives a significant contribution through his more objective perspective in understanding and reflecting upon the selected cases in an equal manner. In the same way, the architect-researcher, through her experience as participating agent, might contribute to the exploration, development and creation of other (future) initiatives.

- As a first feature both research projects are highly interested in the role and position of the **actors**. The position of the selected civic initiatives is related to the official institutions by the notions of top-down and bottom-up. Simultaneously this theme questions the profiles of both the users and drivers within these collectives. It looks at the role 'professionals' play in these city-making processes. This involves a reflection on the empowering capacity and/or the disadvantages of involvement by social workers and researchers.

The actors theme addresses the described issues by their level of self-organisation.

- The dual theme of **ad hoc/organised**, as a second feature, looks at the reflexivity of the emerging actions. These concepts focus more on the swiftness in which an initiative manages to respond to certain conditions or changes. Based on the idea of 'open form' (Hansen, 1961), this theme relates to the architectural metaphor of an open infrastructure. In this theory the initiative of the individual is welcomed and perceived as a constructive, organic and indispensable element for the collective. The ad hoc/organised characteristics aim to research the responsiveness of citizen initiatives for new ideas and alternative approaches. Is there enough flexibility to nimbly respond to new ideas and opportunities or is the organisation structure – mostly horizontal and informal – rather cumbersome? On the other hand a certain level of organisation can bring on a more solid base for long term engagement.

- As a third characteristic the aspect of **activism** is represented in the framework. It questions the potential of these civic initiatives to support democratisation and empowerment. It reflects on their militancy to heighten political consciousness and their willingness to situate their initiative in a broader debate, questioning established practices and choices in society. A lack of criticism and awareness is linked to the notion of indifference.

- The fourth theme of **openness**, studies how open civic collectives are to new people entering the core group. Is it possible for users or outsiders to easily infiltrate towards a central position in the collective? This feature of civic making looks at the inclusiveness and closeness of the collectives in mind-set and de facto.

- As a final enabler, the concept of **commoning** is studied. Each case has a particular way to deal with the 'ownership' and appropriation of a space and/or other common resources. Where the notion of 'commons' brings up an alternative use of resources – moving away from the private-public dichotomy – commoning focusses on the collective act of taking care of collective resources as the central issue. This

issue both addresses the actual management and regulation of collective goods as well as the collective's awareness on this matter.

These features of civic making are brought in relation to the five selected collectives that are derived from the citizen groups studied in the Selfcity project and the Make Your Own City PhD – amongst which the own action case of Commons Josaphat. The following Brussels collectives are researched:

- a. Commons Josaphat (Figure 1.)
- b. Communa asbl (Figure 2.)
- c. Dewey asbl (Figure 3.)
- d. le Grenier des Casseuse de Crise (Figure 4.)
- e. PLOEF (Figure 5.)

3. Discussion and reflection on (future) practices

The study of the five selected cases through the framework for 'features of civic making' contributes to the insight on these kind of self-organised practices of making city.

From the actors theme it is clear that a great deal of the citizens – like architect-researchers – who are actively engaged in these projects have a related professional or artistic background. These 'professionals' – being civic volunteers – recognise the broader meaning of their actions. Photographers, researchers, anthropologists, ecological engineers, etc. and their personal network are therefore - as civic agents - often the drivers behind the collectives. The civic initiative of Dewey is initiated by a core group that has experience in the field of media, photography or the digital. They encourages others to join the action and to contribute with their own talents or support them in improving skills. On the other hand the case of Communa asbl illustrates a disconnection between those active actors that are aware of a transformative potential and those who do not look beyond the concrete advantages of the provided alternative.

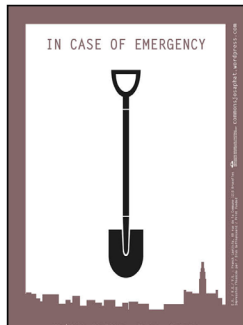
Most of the studied initiatives have difficulties to go beyond the main group of strong drivers and users and to reach people in more precarious conditions. An exception to this is the case of Le Grenier. The collective brings together a wide diversity of ladies mostly from a precarious stratum. Most projects are in one way or another receiving support from the top-down; in the case of Commons Josaphat the collective has managed to gain some small funding from the Region and collaborates with the middle field. Though Le Grenier, more than the other initiatives, receives strong support of the civil society. These latter play a significant empowering role, as such Le Grenier is considerably less self-organised.

For the own practice in Commons Josaphat the actors feature brings up the importance of the own professional background as participating agent. Not only the skills as architect and researcher contribute, but also the awareness on the potential of temporary use and the city scale can do so. The architect-researcher can learn from civil society organisations to empower less strong actors to self-organise and initiate new initiatives of collective city-making on the Josaphat site.

The study of the ad hoc/organised feature affirmed the importance of flexibility. A very responsive attitude towards existing and changing conditions appears to be crucial. The case of PLOEF is a strong example of a collective that is aware of this necessity to be responsive. Their program explicitly leaves space for unexpected additions. This openness for new options allows improvisation, (self-)improvement and the rise of new initiatives. PLOEF illustrates this by having launched a SEL (local exchange system), a GASAP (group of consumers directly in contact with organic farmers) and several other new actions. In contrary Le Grenier, which has a more solid organisation structure with fixed opening moments, does not receive much new ideas on the expansion of the concept. As another main finding on this feature it is noted that a more ad hoc approach can adapt to the fluctuating level of commitment and energy of both the drivers and users. This makes a long term commitment relying on voluntary input feasible. Even in the case of Le Grenier, where the shop is opened at fixed hours, the need is expressed to flexibly

A. Commons Josaphat

This is an open collective of autonomous actors - citizens, activists, associations - that gather around the idea to create and manage our city in common good. Through instigating a public debate and setting up the (temporary) occupation of the site, Commons Josaphat aims to bring their vision on the commons into practice on the Josaphat site.



© Commons Josaphat



© Sarah Oyserman

Actors



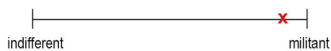
This group is entirely self-organised and combines a wide range of citizens with professional knowledge on varying facets and engaged local residents and several associations. They got a small funding from the government but remain autonomous.

Ad hoc / organised



The rhythm and intensity of meeting are strongly dependent on the voluntary commitment of the members. The collective often responds to opportunities. Due to the horizontal structure decision-making processes are more complex and time consuming.

Activism



The collective has an envisioned goal to rethink the future of the city and to realise an alternative. They would like to debate with decision-makers but also clearly state to pass them by if these would try to block their actions.

Openness



Everyone who supports their vision is highly welcomed and the group seeks to bring the debate to the wider public. Though due to their more chaotic organisation structure, they cannot be as transparent and accessible as they would like to be.

Commoning



The collective actively works on the importance of common resources. They very explicitly are aware of and carry out the debate on the commons. It is their aim to discuss and act in an open and collective manner to realise this commoning.

1. Case study of Commons Josaphat – the PhD practice of the first author.

B. Communa asbl

This non-profit organisation got launched by students. Communa asbl aims to make the housing market in Brussels more accessible for young citizens, artists and people who are in precarious conditions. For this, its members form a community in the occupation of vacant buildings. Simultaneously they organise social events for the neighbourhood.



© Communa asbl



Actors



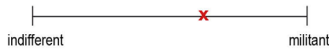
The project responds to a basic and personal need. It got initiated by (law) students and now consists out of a rather diverse community. Through the professional knowledge of some members, the organisation became an institutionalised entity.

Ad hoc / organised



Although, the group has a rather solid structure - being an official non-profit - their consistency and concept have to be adaptive. There is no guarantee on how long they can reside in a certain location, which requires a high level of flexibility.

Activism



An individual need is translated to the broader issue on the insufficient provision of accessible housing in Brussels. The collective, with their partners, organises info sessions to empower others in the legal occupation of empty buildings.

Openness



Although the community organises public events and actively invites their neighbours, the group is rather closed. Having to live together within a limited space, new member need to be agreed upon by the community.

Commoning

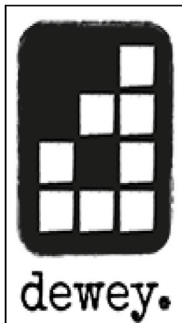


The initiative is driven by an awareness on the scarcity of housing resources. The way in which Communa reframes the idea of 'living together' is a strong example of commoning. However within the group there are conflicts on the sharing of this vision.

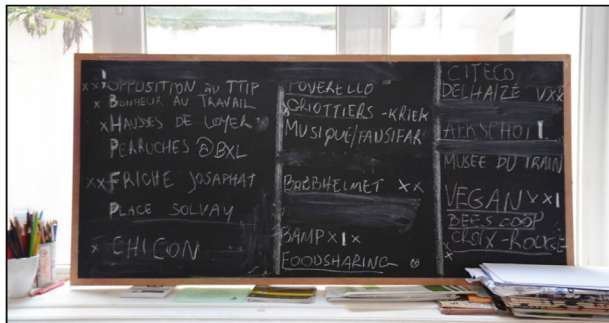
2. Case study of Communa asbl.

C. Dewey asbl

Backboned by a core group, this non-profit is open to anyone who wants to contribute to the local life in one of the Brussels municipalities. The organisation aims to empower citizens in the making and sharing of news / opinions / initiatives / ... through the creation and support of local newspapers.



© Dewey asbl



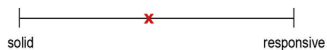
© Dewey asbl

Actors



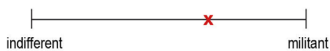
Dewey asbl has a strong core group with drivers that often have a professional background linked to media, photography or the digital. The image of the initiative is determined by its key members and the two municipalities in which they are active.

Ad hoc / organised



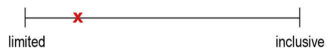
Due to its strong team and official constellations, the organisation is quite solid. Dewey manages to be responsive to opportunities and entails a rather quick decision-making process. Though an uncertainty on funding interrupts a long term perspective.

Activism



Although the main focus is rather simple and practical - to create local ties and encounters - the collective has a significant, yet inexplicit, activist motivation. The collective sharing of information is seen as a tool to give voice to the citizens of Brussels.

Openness



The collective pursues to be open to anyone who wants to contribute to the newspaper. Though, at this point only 2 out of 19 municipalities are active. The strong, but unintended, ownership of the project by its team tackles the accessibility for newcomers.

Commoning



The drivers explicitly recognise information as a common resource. In an open and participatory manner they aim to manage and distribute this local-based information on an autonomous, and in that sense protected, platform.

3. Case study of Dewey asbl.

D. le Grenier des Casseuses de crise

A group of women takes care of a fragile public through the creation and management of a free second hand shop. For this they opened and redecored the unused attic of the local community house for women.



© Le Grenier



Actors



This group includes women from varying backgrounds and manages to reach a more precarious public. They receive significant support from the middle field that acts as an incubator and provides a frame for the group and their actions.

Ad hoc / organised



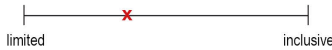
'Le Grenier' is well organised with a fixed dynamic for meeting and opening the shop. The organisation structure has a certain hierarchy. Although there is space for flexibility, suggestions to alter or enlarge the existing concept do not find easy access.

Activism



There is a revolutionary strike. Acting on a very small and local scale these women talk about women emancipation and solidarity. They recognise their strength to create an informal platform through the shop.

Openness



There are no strict boundaries and in principle everyone is welcome. Though there is a distinction between the women who manage the shop and those who are visiting. Due to its hidden location the project does not reach beyond the drivers their network.

Commoning



These ladies share resources that are not as easily accessible for people in precarious conditions. They are not very aware on the ideation of the 'bien commun' but the act itself provides an informal framework for commoning on day to day level.

4. Case study of Le Grenier des Casseuses de crise.

E. PLOEF - PLUS on Est de Fous

The project is initiated by two key figures who opened up their private house in Jette to create a space for unexpected encounters. The place can be best described as a fuzzy and highly bottom-up cultural centre. Film, theatre, percussion sessions, workshops, ... almost anything is possible as long as exchange, reflection and sharing are part of it.



© PLOEF



© PLOEF

Actors



The official owners of the place and their personal network (of artists) form the core. PLOEF allows others to develop their own independent ideas and thus manages to empower new initiatives. Though the sense of collective ownership is weak.

Ad hoc / organised



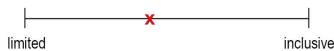
The project is deliberately very vague with a broad and open defined theme. The program is partially left open to leave space for interaction and incorporation of new ideas. You should only not expect others to realise your suggestions.

Activism



Although their website states to have 'no political ambition' a level of activism is present. The participants explicitly state they explore alternatives to respond to the mainly social crisis of our society. They criticise the current conventional practices.

Openness



It is a clear goal to attract a diverse public. Even though they attract a broad public due to the varying program, the reality is not as inclusive as the intentions. The official private ownership of the place blocks the potential for appropriation.

Commoning



The owners distance themselves from the private ownership of this space and aim to make it common. There is no high awareness, but in practice they strongly intend for commoning. Though the lack / fragility of the community does not entirely allow this.

5. Case study of PLOEF.

handle this timing. As a negative side-effect, an extremely open organisation structure demands significantly more energy to fix moments to meet or to get some concrete actions organised. Looking at the case of Commons Josaphat, which is very adaptive, a lot of energy and time is invested in processes of decision-making and the planning of new events or debates. Recently the group has started to install a dynamic by monthly organising a picnic on the Josaphat site. With this action, the collective also aims to become more open towards newcomers.

From this theme the action-research can learn from PLOEF how to empower new initiatives by explicitly welcoming the unexpected. The partially not planning of the program or interventions leaves space for other citizens to contribute in their own way and to set up more initiatives. During the initiation of the temporary use a need to install a rhythm of actions has already been felt. Time will tell if a 'présence architecturale' (Hugron, 2013) will succeed to stimulate a recurring interaction and commitment by newcomers.

An activist stake is recognised in all five of the cases. Although in most cases the initiatives appear to have a higher level of activism than the members are aware of themselves. All collectives claim that they work outside the conventional system, but only few of these 'margin activities' go beyond legal restrictions. While PLOEF questions the borders of their own private ownership, they did not deliberately cross any official rules. They rebel – in their own way – against conventional practices of individual property ownership and alienation, but in doing so they intensely avoid conflict and they aim to make their actions to be officially approved.

The collective of Commons Josaphat, on the other hand, states to be prepared to go against official restrictions if this would be necessary to fight their cause. Even though the implementation of their ideas is still in a preliminary phase, their aim to provide an alternative to existing, criticised situations is far more explicit. Even if Commons Josaphat only manages to create a discourse on the addressed topic – and not to actually realise it on the chosen site – it is possible their actions have reached further. For the activist approach

of the practice within Commons Josaphat, it is clear this has a lot of potential. Most of all there is a strong mind-set to develop an alternative for the convention neo-liberal ways of dealing with the development of the city in Brussels. This, however, has been advanced on a more theoretical level. Since the initiation of temporary use on the Josaphat site, this activist stake has been translated more directly to physical – yet humble – actions.

From the own experience as architect-researcher a hesitation is felt to actually cross boundaries too frankly. Although this often demands significant extra effort, all actors prefer to build up a constructive relationship with the official government. As an illustration, the construction of a shelter for water recuperation (a cooperation between Commons Josaphat and Dewey asbl) is designed in this way that no foundations have to enter in the soil. Following the urban regulations it then can be labelled as a 'temporary construction', thus not in need to request a building permit. Even though, none of the actors has an official permission to build structures on the site, they still – in trespassing – respect the official regulations. On the other hand there is high level of manoeuvrability to intervene as it is clearly stated by both drivers and users that they will give their full support when the collective would get in a conflict with the administrations or decision-makers.

All studied initiatives share an openness in mind set. They all aim to superimpose equal social relationships over ownership or individual leadership. Anyone who wants to contribute is welcome and inclusiveness is highly appreciated. All studied initiatives embrace the superdiverse character of Brussels. Le Grenier manages to bring together drivers and users that come from a more fragile social stratum than those of the other initiatives. Though their actors – being immigrants from a precarious background – also do not mix with other socio-economic groups. The other initiatives that have strong drivers more explicitly want to welcome newcomers and, like PLOEF, deliberately reflect on the topic of inclusiveness. This illustrates a duality between this mind set and the actual realised level of openness at this point. To become entirely inclusive and enhance new

members – preferably from diverse backgrounds – demands far-reaching energy and resources. This is very difficult to achieve for these self-organised citizen initiatives. The most bottom-up initiated projects lack to be entirely inclusive towards citizens from a more precarious social stratum.

As a following finding the case study reveals limitations in openness due to a too strong identity of the main drivers. Although all collectives aim for a horizontal organisation structure they appear to be enabled by non-hierarchical but strong leaders. Both in the cases of Dewey and PLOEF, the initiators' identity is strongly linked with the initiative. This has a disruptive effect on the accessibility for new members. In a collective like Commons Josaphat this issue is a little weaker as there is a multitude of key drivers who also exchange responsibilities. In this case it is clear that a wide range of drivers also impedes the decision-making and lowers the effectiveness of the organisation.

As basic element of their vision, Commons Josaphat aims to be inclusive. Even though, efforts have been made to involve a broader public, this has shown to be not evident. With the temporary use a more diverse public is reached but the majority of users and certainly drivers remain to be strong citizens who are already in one way or another concerned about the topic of the commons. From this study, the architect-researcher can learn to reflect on her own role as actor. Although it is the intention to have a significant contribution to the interventions, a too dominant identity should be avoided in order to not block the openness. There is a duality between enforcing the actions by taking action yourself and empowering others to take up initiative themselves.

This provides new insights for the architect-researcher in the context of the Recup'Kitchen project she initiated within the temporary use on the Josaphat site. The idea of a container kitchen that is linked to the collective garden is part of the practice to enforce the current interventions. Several other actors have been involved and contributed to this design concept. Though this study brings awareness on the fact the idea is

strongly linked to the identity of the architect-researcher.

The final feature of civic making addresses the collectives' awareness on a need to share common resources. All of them respond to an occurring tactical need – like a lack of accessible housing – and show creativity in the making of alternatives. Urban commons – ranging from a free second hand shop in an attic to an area of 25 hectares – are renegotiated through the actions of the five initiatives. In the aspect of commoning the realisation of the act as a community is crucial. PLOEF is open to unexpected interventions in their program, though they clearly state that initiators of this new initiative also have the responsibility to actively take part in its realisation.

For Commons Josaphat, respecting our urban commons is their starting point. Though in the practice, it is not always that evident to realise this commoning. Following this feature it is crucial that the just described Recup'Kitchen idea is perceived as a collective venture. The architect-researcher will have to be aware that this container kitchen is realised and managed with respect to the site and that it, related to the other interventions, positions itself as an urban common.

As an overall finding several cases illustrate that the selected features can multiply each other's effect. When a collective like PLOEF has a more adaptive organisation structure this can improve the openness and the range of actors that take part or even empower newcomers to self-organise their own initiatives. In the same sense Commons Josaphat has several strong and/or professional actors – like an authority in the discourse on the commons or an ecological engineer – that not only contribute to the self-organisation but also can boost the awareness on activism or the need to take care of common resources. This case study and the joint research contributed to the action-research and provided inspiration for new initiatives of city-making.

Regarding the joint research it can be concluded that the case study provided a more elaborate insight, though it is too soon to make statements on the transformative potential of these initiatives. The framework brought up an awareness on the five listed features and made it possible to learn

from other civic initiatives. Also the positioning of the own practice within a wider context provided more insight. This knowledge did not only bring an added value to the own practice but can also support further city-making initiatives. The need to learn from other initiatives and their strengths and weaknesses has been revealed in the Selfcity projects' collective meeting moment (BRAL vzw, 2015). The drivers of several of the studied initiatives (Commons Josaphat, Dewey asbl, Le Grenier and PLOEF) interacted with each other and other collectives in this setting. Multiple participants expressed a need for more visibility, interaction and collective reflection. The making of tools that empower these initiatives and the formation of networks - like a participatory digital platform (Pak and Verbeke, 2014) that gives an oversight of several collective city-making initiatives in Brussels - is a relevant future direction to meet this goal.

(Fig. 6).

As for the own interventions within the practice of the first author, the comparative study created the opportunity to take a step back to reflect. The objective perspective that has been offered through the Selfcity project and its initiator contributed to a more rich and defined framework of 'features for civic making' and addressed topics - like openness - that have not been strongly elaborated on before in the own practice. This perspective brought up critical reflections that have been described in the beginning of this chapter. The cooperation with and noteworthy contribution of people in the field has been a significant support to position the temporary use practice amongst similar initiatives. The exploration of features for civic making allowed positioning of the PhD research among similar cases and contributed to the gaining of deeper insight.

As a solid result the five key issues that have been addressed through this paper are incorporated in the design process of an informative intervention at the Josaphat site. The first feature should explore the potential of being open. A more theatre-like construction (see Figure 6.) to facilitate a multitude of social encounter and dialogues is aimed to be appropriated by people who are not

part of the collective. In the sense of commoning it will be important to realise a collective creation and construction process that is open to the intervening of new ideas and opportunities. An ad hoc making process in situ is desired and could facilitate interaction with newcomers while encouraging actors to contribute with their skills and experience. Finally an intervention on the street can potentially increase the awareness on the emerging occupation and the activist goals of Commons Josaphat.

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